



## Progress and Conflict

The writing of this Communist University course on Education was planned for years. Actual preparation took more than a year. It was rolled out for the first time in early 2013. Naturally, the struggle in education has continued. In the first iteration, there was reference to current conflicts within education at the time. The course would not be able to trace every topical event. But there will need to be some sort of update or editing of the topical material.

Up to this point, we have managed to tackle the main theoretical load that the course must carry, and continue to carry, in its successive annual re-presentations on one of the four CU channels.

We have looked at theories of mass public education such as N F S Grundtvig's "Schools for Life", an idea that survives in the form of the Danish folk-high-school movement; Paulo Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed"; and the Cuban

“Universalisation of the University”. We have seen, through Lenin’s eyes, that all education is political. We have seen how the political conflict plays out in the realm of conventional theories of formal education, and through Jean Lave’s eyes, we have seen the relevance of Marx’s Third Thesis on Feuerbach, among others. We have understood, through Mike Cole’s, Andy Blunden’s and Lev Vygotsky’s eyes, that the conceptual separation of schooling from life is a mistake, and that the development of people is one historic and revolutionary process.

As with previous Communist University courses, the last parts of the course on Education have been reserved for the more current “problematic” facing South Africa, in the light of the theoretical review that is comprised in the earlier parts. Not for the first time in the CU courses, we found that life had conspired to dramatise the matters under review, and that a real-life crisis presented itself at the same moment as we arrived at consideration of the potential for conflict.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of March 2013, the South African Democratic Teachers’ Union (SADTU) called for Minister of Education Motshekga’s resignation, and announced its intention *“to mobilize all our members for an indefinite strike as a response to the assault on collective bargaining, our basic right as workers and to promote quality public education.”*

On International Women’s Day (8<sup>th</sup> March 2013), at a special event in Katlehong, Ekurhuleni, SADTU launched a Campaign

for Quality Public Education. This was a potentially revolutionary move by the organised educators in SADTU to redefine education qualitatively, so that it can respond to South Africa's historical need for popular development, as opposed to the narrow school curriculum dictated by the bourgeois imperialist hegemony that has still not released its long-term grip on South Africa's educational system.

In the latter respects, SADTU's intentions are in keeping with the ANC's January 8<sup>th</sup> Statement of 2013 (attached), which in turn reflects the transactions of the 53<sup>rd</sup> ANC National Conference that took place the previous month, in Mangaung. The January 8<sup>th</sup> Statement calls for major, integrated, educational initiatives. It also declared the Decade of the Cadre, and declared 2013 to be the year of unity-in-action towards socio-economic freedom.

Among the initiatives mentioned in the 2013 ANC January 8<sup>th</sup> Statement were these:

- Internal education of ANC members, politically, generally and academically
- Literacy and general education of the community led by the ANC at local level
- Assistance by ANC-led volunteers to the formal-education schools in the localities.
- Expansion of access to education, including to Further

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- Commitment to the development of indigenous languages and to their use in schools

If it had proceeded nicely, the ANC's programme was capable of growing into the kind of co-ordinated raising of political and general culture of the nation that we would want to see in the light of the first seven parts of this course on Education. But instead, within days, there was conflict between the Minister of Basic Education and the organised educators. There was a massive one-day protest against the Ministers' threats, in April, in Pretoria, organised by SADTU. This checked the Minister but it did not finish the conflict. SADTU called for the resignation of the Minister, and of the Director-General.

An SACP 2013 statement came out plainly in favour of education for liberation: People's Education for People's Power! SADTU took up the banner of Quality Public Education, showing willingness to lead, in a revolutionary way, in this field.

We will, this time, continue to use the same 2013 documents that were previously used in this part, but we will add the extensive section on education from the ANC's 2014 national and provincial election manifesto, as a separate 4-page leaflet. We will attach, and make available by download, the following documents:

- ANC January 8<sup>th</sup> 2013 Statement
- A Compilation of SACP, SADTU and ANC statements from February and March 2013
- Extracts on Education from the 2014 ANC National and Provincial Election Manifesto

The next item within this part of the course looks at several visions of how the development of education can be managed for “quality”, in the bourgeois sense, derived from the trading of commodities, of semi-static standards or grades; and also qualitatively, in the revolutionary sense of qualitative, as opposed to quantitative, change.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-texts: [ANC January 8th Statement, 2013](#), [Compilation of SACP, SADTU and ANC statements, February-March 2013](#), and [Extracts on Education from the 2014 ANC National and Provincial Election Manifesto](#).
- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files [please click here](#).